

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 CU-04 AID-20 OPR-02 /116 W

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R 201133Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5439

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 4124

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CB

SUBJECT: THE TEACHER PROBLEM

REF: PHNOM PENH 4066

1. MINISTER OF EDUCATION KEO SANGKOM TOLD US TODAY (MAR 20) THAT SCHOOLS ARE RUNNING AT ABOUT 40 P/C OF NORMAL CAPACITY ON THIS THE SECOND DAY OF THEIR REOPENING. HE ATTRIBUTED THE LOW ATTENDANCE TO THE FACT THAT MANY STUDENTS WENT TO THE PROVINCES WHEN PHNOM PENH SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED AND OTHERS IN TOWN HAVE STILL NOT RECEIVED WORD OF THE REOPENING. SOME TEACHERS ARE, HOWEVER, STILL REFUSING TO RETURN TO THEIR CLASSROOMS, HE INDICATED.

2. KEO SANGKIM STATED THAT THE ARREST OF A SECONDARY AND A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER DURING PRE-MARCH 17 SWEEPS HAS CAUSED RUMBLINGS WITHIN TEACHER RANKS. HE MET WITH TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES THIS MORNING AND AGREED TO THEIR REQUEST TO ASK THE NATIONAL POLICE TO RELEASE THE MEN IF THERE IS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES.

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3. KEO SANGKIM ADMITTED THAT VERY LITTLE PROGRESS HAS

BEEN MADE TOWARD FINDING A MEANS TO INCREASE THE TEACHERS' INCOME BEFORE THE SCHEDULED APRIL 4 NATIONAL TEACHERS CONGRESS. HE CONFIRMED THAT PARENTS' ASSOCIATION LEADERS HAVE REJECTED A PROPOSAL THAT THEY CONTRIBUTE TO A TEACHERS' FUND, NOTING THAT THESE ASSOCIATIONS ALREADY ARE SHOULDERING VIRTUALLY ALL SCHOOL BUILDING COSTS. A NATIONAL EDUCATION TAX IS UNDER CONSIDERATION, HE ADDED, BUT STUDIES ON HOW IT COULD BE APPLIED CANNOT BE COMPLETED BEFORE APRIL 4. HE THEREFORE HAS PROPOSED THAT THE TEACHERS' TEACHING ALLOWANCE (PRIME PEDAGOGIQUE) BE INCREASED BY 2,000 RIELS AS A FIRST AND ADMITTEDLY INSUFFICIENT STEP TOWARD MEETING THEIR PAY DEMANDS. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

4. WE PLAN TO MEET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND KEO SANGKIM NEXT WEEK TO REEMPHASIZE THE NEED TO COME UP WITH VIABLE PAY PACKAGE FOR TEACHERS BEFORE APRIL 4.
ENDERS

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